

CHALLENGE



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IT'S A LETHAL SYSTEM

SMASH THE BOSSES AND THEIR KKKOPS



Nicholas Burgos



LOS ANGELES, November 18—The headline almost says it all. *He Checked into a UCLA Hospital While Suffering From a Mental Illness, and a Sheriff Shot Him Nine Times While Trying To Use the Restroom* (LA Taco, 11/16).

On October 6, Nick Burgos, 38, was gunned down by LA County Sheriffs while hospitalized at Harbor UCLA hospital. Not even within a so-called "health" institution are workers safe from these kkkops. A healthcare mass organization, in which Progressive Labor Party is active, responded with protests. One family, survivors of previous police terror, joined the fight. Their loved one Ruben Herrera was killed in the same hospital by the same racist sheriffs six years prior.

What LA Taco didn't say was that the only way

to live in an unlivable system is to build a new one. Between the choices of a racist system spiraling out in crisis and the aim of an antiracist system built on the foundation of need and collectivity, we must intensify the side we want to win. That's communism, a system run by and for the working class.

Killing a worker with an IV drip in his arm

Nick was suffering from mental illness and went to the hospital voluntarily. In fact, he was in his third week at the hospital. The medical staff and sheriffs knew him. He had become agitated at being prohibited from going to the restroom. He was still pulling on his IV (intravenous) pole with the line in his arm when the cowardly kkkops claimed "fear" of a "metal

object." Nick was shot nine times. He then underwent nine surgeries, with large open abdominal wounds and a partially amputated leg. After three weeks of suffering, he succumbed. While the coroner ruled his shooting a homicide, these killer cops remain roaming our medical wards.

The healthcare mass organization responded quickly after hearing about the shooting. The first protest we—antiracists and PLP—organized drew over 100 healthcare workers and students. We rallied in front of the hospital and called for the sheriffs to be immediately removed from all healthcare spaces. We held our second march and protest on October 22, at LA County USC Hospital, the largest of the county hospitals and home to a sheriff sub-station. This drew about 50 healthcare workers and students.

Family left in the dark

At this point, Nick's name wasn't released to the press and we had not yet made contact with his family. In fact, Nick's family was not informed for over a week.

In the weeks prior, Nick had regular visits from his mother. As his brother Benjamin said, for weeks while Nick struggled to survive, the medical staff did not provide proper Spanish translation to his mother. Moreover, as his body lay riddled with bullets and with open surgical wounds, he remained handcuffed to the bed.

His only crime was being a young Latin man suffering from mental illness and wanting to use the restroom! Nick Burgos joins the thousands of our sisters and brothers stolen by this rotten racist system, and the fact that this happened at a "safety net" hospital is a further indictment of this whole capitalist system. A system that kills and terrorizes workers does not deserve to breathe.

If this nearly nine-month period living within this pandemic has unveiled anything, it is that systemic racism is part and parcel of capitalism and leaves no institution spared. From George Floyd and Breonna Taylor, just as police plague our Black, Latin, indigenous and working-class

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OUR FIGHT

- ★Progressive Labor Party (PLP) fights to destroy capitalism and the dictatorship of the capitalist class. We organize workers, soldiers and youth into a revolutionary movement for communism.
- ★The dictatorship of the working class — communism—can provide a lasting solution to the disaster that is today’s world for billions of people. This cannot be done through electoral politics, but requires a revolutionary movement and a mass Red Army led by PLP.
- ★Worldwide capitalism, in its relentless drive for profit, inevitably leads to war, fascism, poverty, disease, starvation and environmental destruction. The capitalist class, through its state power — governments, armies, police, schools and culture — maintains a dictatorship over the world’s workers. The capitalist dictatorship supports, and is supported by, the anti-working-class ideologies of racism, sexism, nationalism, individualism and religion.
- ★While the bosses and their mouthpieces claim “communism is dead,” capitalism is the real failure for billions worldwide. Capitalism returned to Russia and China because socialism retained many aspects of the profit system, like wages and privileges. Russia and China did not establish communism.
- ★Communism means working collectively to build a worker-run society. We will abolish work for wages, money and profits. While capitalism needs unemployment, communism needs everyone to contribute and share in society’s benefits and burdens.
- ★Communism means abolishing racism and the concept of “race.” Capitalism uses racism to super-exploit Black, Latin, Asian and indigenous workers, and to divide the entire working class.
- ★Communism means abolishing the special oppression of women— sexism—and divisive gender roles created by the class society.
- ★Communism means abolishing nations and nationalism. One international working class, one world, one Party.
- ★Communism means that the minds of millions of workers must become free from religion’s false promises, unscientific thinking and poisonous ideology. Communism will triumph when the masses of workers can use the science of dialectical materialism to understand, analyze and change the world to meet their needs and aspirations.
- ★Communism means the Party leads every aspect of society. For this to work, millions of workers — eventually everyone — must become communist organizers. Join Us!

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WHO WRITES FOR CHALLENGE?

CHALLENGE is for the working class, produced by the working class. The fact that CHALLENGE/PLP articles are not signed grows from PLP’s criticism of the cult of the individual in the former socialist Soviet Union and China. We do not want to encourage the possibility of building up a “following” around any particular individual.

While an article may be written by one person, the final version is based on collective discussion and criticism. Many times this collective discussion even precedes an individual’s writing of an article.

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Editorial

Biden’s victory buys time for bosses—workers still lose!

The results are in. The victory for U.S. President-elect Joe Biden is a step toward more racism and global war. In the March/April issue of Foreign Affairs, the leading journal of the liberal finance capital wing of the U.S. ruling class, Biden stated, “As president, I will take immediate steps to renew U.S. democracy and alliances, protect the United States’ economic future, and once more have America lead the world” (Foreign Affairs, 1/23). Now that Biden and running mate Kamala Harris have won the election, their first task is to strengthen the U.S. in its life-and-death competition with the Chinese and Russian capitalist bosses.

Historically, the ruling class has used elections to sort out their differences and redefine their strategies for inter-imperialist rivalry and the best way to attack the U.S. working class. But with U.S. capitalism in a state of growing weakness and volatility, this fall’s election resolved very little. If anything, the gutter-racist Trump has become even more dangerous as he refuses to concede (New York Times, 11/16).

Communists must cut through the noise

A shared hatred of Trump temporarily united the Democratic Party bosses and the workers in their base. But now that the bogeyman is on his way out the door, the differences seem sharper than ever between finance capital’s status quo “moderate” wing and the new wave that wants more aggressive reforms of the bosses’ failing system. Virginia Congresswoman Abigail Spanberger chastised “progressive” party mates like Alexandria Ocasio Cortez for embracing “defund the police” sloganeering and not pushing back against Republican charges of socialism (NYT, 11/5).

Now led by Biden, the Big Fascist finance capital bosses will need to find a way to close ranks to compete with China’s growing economic power (Reuters, 11/16). To promote patriotism among skeptical workers, the cannon fodder they’ll need for their next war, the rulers may offer student loan forgiveness, climate change deals, or expanded health care coverage. The international working class must cut through the noise of politics and understand that any reforms offered under capitalism will be racist and sexist at their core.

The liberal rulers will also have to deal with 73 million Trump voters (10 million more than in 2016), a raging pandemic [see page 8], and an economy in crisis. As communists, Progressive Labor Party’s (PLP) role is to help workers understand that no matter who is president, our class will be exploited and brutalized until we commit to fighting for communist revolution. Only by smashing capitalism can we run society on our own terms, in a new, egalitarian way.

Workers’ identity crisis

Over his disgraceful 40-year-plus career in Washington, Biden proved to the liberal bosses that he was one of the most reliably racist, anti-worker warmongers in town (see CHALLENGE editorial, 11/4). As California’s attorney general, Harris supported the jailing and police abuse of Black, Latin and women workers (NYT, 8/9). A week before the election, Biden announced that workers

in Philadelphia, one of the poorest cities in the country, had no excuse for “looting and violence” in response to the racist kkkop murder of Walter Wallace Jr. (The Hill, 10/28). Even so, many Black, Latin, and women workers believed that voting for this ticket from hell would improve their own lives.

From their life experience, workers know the facts of life under capitalist “democracy,” the mask for the bosses’ dictatorship. They know we can’t vote for more jobs or to end poverty or unemployment or racist police terror. We can’t vote to end sexist inequalities or domestic violence. We can’t vote against drone bombings or climate change or capitalist wars that kill or displace millions. We cannot simply vote to create a different world. Even so, a higher proportion of workers voted in this U.S. presidential election than in any other in more than 100 years (Washington Post, 11/5). But if revolution wasn’t on the ballot, why was there a record turnout for the toxic Biden-Harris ticket? In short, most workers don’t yet understand that their essential identity is their membership in the international working class. Many voted for the same reason that so many people pray. They hold to the illusion that the true power to change their lives lies in a force outside the working class itself.

Our long-term fight

The shameful administration of Deporter in Chief Barack Obama confirmed our Party’s understanding that there are no good managers--i.e., politicians--of the bosses’ nightmare system. The failed strategy of the old communist movement to work as the “left opposition” within the Democratic Party led to reformism and irrelevancy. PLP has always been clear that liberal misleaders like Obama, Biden, and Harris are in fact the greatest dangers, even more so than the outright racist Republicans. Why? Because they’re more effective in preventing our class from seeing the catastrophic reality of capitalism.

PLP remains active in teachers’ unions, student movements, immigrants’ rights campaigns, police brutality protests, and strikes from the U.S. to Latin America, Asia, Europe, and the Caribbean. In the early months of the Covid-19 outbreak, we called out pseudo “radical” mayors like Ras Baraka of Newark and Bill de Blasio of New York for their racist curfews and violent policing of demonstrations against murder by cops. At high schools and colleges around the world, we have joined in challenging sellout union bosses who betray education workers’ struggles in the face of relentless cutbacks.

But here is the key: Instead of fighting only for reforms, as ends in themselves, we treat these struggles as schools for communism. While standing shoulder to shoulder with our class sisters and brothers, we take every opportunity to share more advanced political ideas, to teach and to learn from them as well. Our task is to build a mass revolutionary communist organization, and to sweep the Bidens and Harris’s of the world into the dustbin of history. PLP is taking the lead by showing that our class and our class alone can lead the world into a future where the pandemic of capitalism is eradicated for all time. ☸

APHA

Racism is a health crisis; revolution is the cure

November 18—This year the American Public Health Association (APHA) held its annual meeting virtually under the theme *Preventing Violence*, with racist structural violence perpetrated by the capitalist class a key focus of the program. In past years, this topic would have focused on neighborhood violence, gun control, and “violence interrupter” programs. This year, a culmination of years of communist organizing and sharpening mass fightback against racism succeeded in bringing antiracist politics to greater masses of healthcare workers.

Healthcare workers in the Progressive Labor Party (PLP) have long been members of the APHA and struggled to sharpen the fight against racism among its membership of more than 25,000 healthcare workers. The shift in the APHA’s focus, with racism now identified by the APHA as a social determinant of health, helped bring police and prison violence front and center as public health crises.

PLP members and many friends advanced the fight even further against capitalism this year through a virtual program of our own on October 28, calling for communist revolution. Violent revolution against the ruling class was presented as the alternative to state sanctioned violence against the working class.

Capitalism = violence against the working class

The programs connected the “Preventing Violence” theme to capitalism’s inherent structural violence including a racist lack of housing, food, jobs and education. “Gun control” laws touted by many in the Democratic Party were identified as being used to disarm Black workers while police violence and murder of Black, Latin and indigenous workers continues unabated. A preponderance of Covid-19 cases and deaths among Black and Latin workers and incarcerated persons comprised yet another example.

Progressive Labor Party carried out two major initiatives at APHA this year: fighting mass racist incarceration and hosting an open PLP-led panel on how communism can smash racism and capitalism.

Smash mass racist incarceration

Several members of PLP and many friends took an active part in pushing forward against mass incarceration. Readers of CHALLENGE may remember the consistent pressure we put on the APHA to support this policy: “Law Enforcement Violence is a Public Health Issue” which passed in 2018 after a three-year struggle. This year after the uprisings around the country and the dangers of the Covid-19 pandemic, a resolution to work towards abolition



of prisons passed. Over 90 percent of the governing council voted in favor of “Advancing Public Health Interventions to Address the Harms of the Carceral System”. Although it passed overwhelmingly, there were early efforts to prevent bringing it up at all. First the reviewers said it had too many references! When many of us wrote to protest such a stupid reason and added even more data, they agreed to let it go forward. When 40 people wanted to speak to the resolution in the hearings, they placed it on the CONSENT calendar. One approved amendment called for “safely” discharging prisoners. Many voted to leave it out because it weakens the action step on releasing prisoners, so we will be dealing with this over the coming year.

This resolution argues for the abolition of prisons and other forms of surveillance, such as probation and ankle monitors. When the “progressive” San Francisco State’s Attorney, Chesa Boudin, (son of fake-leftist and terrorist Weathermen “revolutionaries”) spoke in the Medical Care Section, one of the resolution authors challenged him on the increased usage of ankle monitors in San Francisco. Boudin blamed it on the judges. He did not even raise the role of police and prisons to repress and control workers, particularly Black workers.

The abolition of punishment and a restorative justice approach will require a revolution against the capitalist state that requires racist policing and mass incarceration for its survival. A vague “human rights” agenda is not adequate to the task of fighting capitalism and racism, and PLP must guarantee that class struggle including demands to “put killer cops in cell blocks” is understood as just and necessary.

For the murdered-by-kkkops, fan the flames of communist struggle

Continued from page 1

communities, so does this virus, disproportionately infecting and killing us.

In fact, every day millions of our class sisters and brothers suffer from preventable health ailments caused by the stress of living under capitalism. Nearly every chronic illness or leading cause of death can be attributed to the inequity and terror generated by capitalism’s need to divide our class in order to extract maximum profits. The bosses’ public healthcare institutions, like Harbor UCLA, are designed to only maintain the minimum amount of health to keep workers working and profitable and have historically been underfunded and under-resourced.

Workers and families vs. Mahajan

Nick Burgos is the second worker to be shot and killed while being cared for in this hospital in the last six years. Meanwhile, the current Chief Medical Officer, Dr. Anish Mahajan, has made it clear he intends to continue this fascist policing and “healthcare” model as opposed to well established methods of medical personnel intervening with patients in a

mental health crisis. He created a task force which is to “really think about — within the bounds of existing law which enables law enforcement to carry weapons in the hospital — how do we best collaborate with our law enforcement partners when situations arise, where patients become violent?” (LAist, 11/16).

Clearly, Mahajan does not intend to meet the demands of workers and families who want these murderers off our streets and out of our health care spaces. We will continue to work within our mass organizations to not only to point out the limits of the reform struggle, but also to expose the whole public health system as part of a larger state apparatus that serves the needs of capitalism.

We have already begun having these conversations and two friends have been meeting regularly in a Party study group for over six months. They have also been joining the protests we’ve been having with families like Alex Flores who was murdered by LAPD last year. They need to help us fight for communism, a system run by and for the working class.

What connects Nick and Alex?

A couple of days ago, Nick’s sister-in-law found the social media page of Alex Flores and sent us a message. (CHALLENGE readers may remember that

Help build the fightback:

1. Join a Progressive Labor Study group
2. Use resolutions in struggles and programs: www.endingpoliceviolence.com
3. Share the virtual program which can be accessed on Facebook: Racism and Capitalism: Is Communism the Solution? Or click on discussion at <https://tinyurl.com/y3v7z5pv>.
4. Read and contribute to blog by APHA members: www.multiracialunity.org

Communism: the only solution to heal the working class

PLP’s second initiative was a virtual panel for potential public health revolutionaries and friends. A 90-minute presentation and discussion on “Racism and Capitalism: Is Communism the Solution?” attracted an audience of at least 125 participants on Facebook and Zoom platforms. This approach gave PLP members in our public health group an opportunity to be more visible to more workers than in our previous APHA efforts, and the event was recorded for further distribution (see box).

The program highlighted fightbacks against police murder and racist evictions, and calls for the need for a violent revolution against the capitalist class internationally and shared our vision of communism — a society without wages or class divisions, racism or sexism. Multiracial unity in building the class struggle was emphasized as critical to workers’ success. Racism hurts Black workers most severely, especially women, and weakens the working class by dividing us and allows the ruling class to pay lower wages and spend fewer resources on all of us. One speaker addressed the liberal and misguided politics of white privilege, noting “It is not a privilege to be white under capitalism.”

In the setting of the APHA conference on violence, the understanding of the structural violence of capitalism and a militant working-class revolution for communism was accessible and warmly received by the audience. Questions from the audience gave us a chance to discuss the errors and great advances made in previous revolutions and to encourage the fight for the future of the international working class. We have reached out to more of our co-workers and students and have expanded our networks and study groups and we will continue to improve our work in this way. ☺

Alex Flores was murdered by LAPD nearly one year ago on November 19, 2019. The Flores family, anti-racists, and PLP have been fighting in the streets since.) We were then informed that Alex and Nick grew up together and were really good friends!

This is more than a “small world” story. It is case in point to just how widespread racist police terror is! In fact there are countless stories we’ve heard from families who describe other family members being killed or brutalized by the police. It also reflects how racism is capitalism’s Achilles heel. As the communist, antifascist saying goes, “They killed us and killed us until there were millions of us!”

Connect the dots, draw in a fighting spirit

We are already in the process of connecting the two families as we commemorate the “Anniversary” of Alex Flores this week. We will continue this struggle—within our mass organizations, on the job, with the many families we are meeting—and expand this fight against racist killer cops and the whole capitalist system which they serve.

Help us intensify this fight by sharing this struggle with your friends, co-workers, and loved ones. And join the fight for the long haul. Communism, a system run by and for the working class, needs readers like you. ☺

Ethiopia: on the brink of civil war and a flashpoint for imperialist proxy war

Ethiopia, once considered a linchpin for the U.S. imperialists in the Horn of Africa, is on the brink of civil war between two fighting factions: the rival Tigray People's Liberation Front and the Prime Minister Nobel Peace Prize winner Abiy Ahmed administration.

This conflict has the potential to draw in imperialists of all stripes because control over the Horn of Africa is critical to controlling oil routes, the capitalists' lifeblood. The working class in Ethiopia and everywhere have nothing to gain from these ethnic divisions.

Bosses in the Tigray region (the ethnic group makes up six percent of the population) proceeded with regional elections after the central government had canceled elections nationwide supposedly due to the pandemic. This set off a military fight. There have been rocket attacks on airports, jet fighters and infantry sent into Tigray by the central government and reports of brutal massacres of civilians. Workers' access to the internet, phones, and electricity has been shut down as well. Over 550 have already died and countless others still stand to be displaced. Nearly 30,000 have already fled to Sudan. We must turn our guns on all these bosses and fight for communism, where workers run society.

A land mine for proxy wars

A conflict in Ethiopia could draw in the whole region and then some. These include regional imperialists like Saudi Arabia and Turkey but also the main imperialist superpowers, the U.S. and China. The competing interests can be a landmine for an eventual world war—something no imperialist is yet ready but all preparing for.

Eritrea, former enemy of war, is on the side of Abiy administration. Egypt, a competitor, can "could exploit current circumstances to sow further divisions...Somalia's fragile government has long been underwritten by Ethiopian security...Finally, the United Arab Emirates has interests in both Ethiopia and Eritrea, and enjoys good relations with Abiy and Isaias — as well as Egypt and Sudan's military brass" (Brookings, 11/16).

The U.S. ruling class's internal weaknesses paralyze them from acting on their profit-driven needs. "The United States, meanwhile, has long deemed Ethiopia an important ally in a volatile region, and might have been an ideal intermediary. But the Trump administration's wayward policies — including its unbalanced support for Egypt in the...Nile water negotiations — have left Washington with little clout at a moment of extraordinary peril" ((Brookings, 11/16).

Chinese imperialists wasted no time; they have poured money into Ethiopia, accounting for about 60 percent of foreign investment last year (Xinhua, 1/29). Recently, the Chinese bosses also established their first overseas military base in the neighboring country of Djibouti (see CHALLENGE, 12/9/16).

Under the president-elect Joe Biden's administration, the U.S. imperialists will try to reclaim some of their influence in the region to counter their Chinese rivals. At stake is the chokepoint at the strait of Bab el-Mandeb.

Crisis opens the door to anti-worker violence

Local rulers of different ethnic groups have once again channeled the anger and distress of the working class from one region into violence against



workers of other ethnic groups.

What is missing in this unstable mix is the leadership of communists and the building of a mass revolutionary party. Progressive Labor Party (PLP) can and must fill that void, uniting all workers and bringing internationalist politics and class struggle against this capitalist carnage. We must build that leadership for millions of workers and students and break free of the bosses' global power struggles in the name of imperialist war.

The deadly consequences for the working class of this capitalist system are apparent and sharpening worldwide. We also see the mass fightback of workers and students who are standing up to the chaos and misery. PLP proudly salutes the example set by our class sisters and brothers and invites them to join our international struggle for a communist world without bosses or borders.✊

CUNY bosses use Covid-19 pandemic to attack workers and students

NEW YORK CITY, November 14—With the blessing of New York's racist-in-chief Andrew Cuomo, City University of New York (CUNY) administrators have used the Covid-19 pandemic, as the pretense to launch an all-out racist attack that will hurt students the most.

Covid-19 crisis has killed more CUNY workers than at any other university system (Higher Ed, 6/23). What's more, almost 3,000 part-time faculty lost their positions at the start of the fall semester. A hiring freeze has left administrative offices severely understaffed, as workers left, got sick and/or died.

Class sizes have ballooned, with some online classes hosting 80-100 students. Research suggests that effective online classes should have no more than 12 students (Forbes, 6/28).

Most recently, CUNY has indicated that this spring they will impose a 20 percent operating budget cut and decided unilaterally to indefinitely postpone the 2 percent pay increase for faculty and staff that is part of the current contract.

The racism of these attacks is undeniable. Nearly 50 percent of students at senior colleges and 67.3 percent at community colleges are Black and Latin. Due to the inherent racism of a capitalist system that breeds off of profit and competition, any cuts to CUNY will affect Black and Latin students more adversely.

It won't end until we make it end

The students and workers at CUNY are coming to the realization that this unrelenting wave of attacks will never end unless we make it end. There is a growing militancy within the entire CUNY community. Members and friends of Progressive Labor Party (PLP) have struggled to heighten this awakening—making the case that what is happening at CUNY is just a symptom of the capitalist disease and that we can never have education that serves the working class until rid ourselves of this disease. We say this as we fight side-by-side every day with our coworkers, students and classmates.

The struggle within the faculty and staff union has picked up as more and more workers understand, not only that the attacks from CUNY won't end, but also that the union has not led the kind of militant struggle that is necessary to defeat them. PL members are present in a number of union committees, pushing for greater militancy, antiracism and the need for a worker-student alliance.

As the possibility of a strike develops, we will strengthen ties and more boldly share our politics of replacing capitalism and its educational apparatus with communism.

Students lead the way

Most importantly, students have led the way as the CUNY struggle continues to unfold. They have provided leadership at events held throughout the past few semesters, including a forum and speak-out on the murder of Breonna Taylor, the need for a strike at CUNY, elections and multiple demonstrations against adjunct layoffs and increased class size.

Some of these students are in Party-led study groups, which have been a steady occurrence during the pandemic, discussing and learning about communist ideas and the need for communist revolution.

The situation at CUNY is both disturbing and inspiring. The racist bosses, attempting as they always do to solve their financial crisis on the backs of workers and students, will continue their attacks. This spring looks especially grim, and even greater layoffs and cuts to services are almost certain.

Where there is oppression, however, there is always resistance, and so there is reason to be optimistic. Militancy among workers and students is growing as the contradictions of capitalism become more apparent every day. We communists are right there, struggling with ourselves to more boldly share our vision of a capitalism-free future and with our classmates and coworkers to join the fight.✊

Working-Class Culture

Jacob Lawrence's powerful paintings of class struggle

'The part the Negro has played in all these events has been greatly overlooked. I intend to bring it out.'

-Jacob Lawrence on Black worker's historic role

Jacob Lawrence, the great Black social realist artist and one of the major U.S. painters of the 20th century, understood that struggle was primary. The first and overdue exhibition from his mid-1950s series of paintings, *Struggle: From the History of the American People*, is now touring the U.S. When it came to the Metropolitan Museum in New York, in an opening delayed by the pandemic, long lines greeted viewers. But this unique exhibition was worth the wait. Unlike most Met exhibitions, this show featured the politics of struggle. Lawrence (1917-2000) counted communists like Langston Hughes and Richard Wright among his friends. While he never joined the Communist Party himself, he had a deep understanding of the racist inequalities of capitalism.

Lawrence knew struggle from an early age. His parents were part of the Great Migration of Black workers who left their persecution in the South in the early and mid-20th century to seek better job opportunities in the North. The family lived briefly in Atlantic City, where Lawrence was born, before moving to Philadelphia, where his parents split up. Leaving Jacob and two siblings in foster homes, his mother moved to Harlem for better job prospects. The children joined her a couple years later, and Lawrence took art classes in the mid-1930s funded by the Federal Art Project, one of the Franklin Delano Roosevelt's New Deal agencies.

Framing art in antiracist and working-class struggle

Other artists, writers, and communist intellectuals recognized Lawrence's incredible talent for design, his knowledge of history, and his singular focus to expose exploitation. After his *Toussaint L'Ouverture* series of 1938 won the young artist acclaim, he used a fellowship to fund his work on three more historical series about anti-racist fighters: Frederick Douglass, Harriet Tubman, and John Brown. In 1941, Lawrence completed his landmark *Migration Series*. This epic, 60-panel work showed the exploitation and hardships for Black workers in the South, the ordeal of their journeys to northern cities like Chicago and New York, and their challenges in adapting to new social structures. Lawrence's family was part of that migration and his experiences informed his work. While he grew up in the supportive community of Harlem, he knew what it meant to live as a Black man in Jim Crow America. He had a sharp eye for the capitalist structures perpetuating racism, a hatred of the poison of racist segregation, and a deep appreciation for the power of working-class fightback.

In the mid-1950s, during the height of the Cold War and U.S. anti-communism, Lawrence embarked on his *Struggle* series that's now on exhibition. As he told an interviewer:

The history of the United States fascinates



Lawrence captures revolutionary potential of Black workers here: *We have no property! We have no wives! No children! We have no city! No country!*
—petition of many slaves 1773,

me. Right now, I'm reading in it, looking for any episode that suggests a symbol of struggle. The part the Negro has played in all these events has been greatly overlooked. I intend to bring it out. We were not just slaves before the Civil War. We were volunteers in all the wars. We played a great part.

Informed by Lawrence's research at the Schomburg Library in Harlem, the result was a series of 30 paintings that ranged from the American Revolution to the War of 1812. The panels focus not on generals and politicians, but on the struggles of ordinary people. Many represent the strivings of indigenous and women workers for social justice.

The exhibition's first panel, called *... is life so dear or peace so sweet as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery?—Patrick Henry, 1775*, quotes from Henry's closing line from a speech in Richmond. It depicts a group of men gathered in a circle with fists raised in response to the speech. The exhibition catalogue points out the irony of Henry's *Give me liberty or give me death* rhetoric, given that the War of Independence from Britain would perpetuate slavery. Like many of the "Founding Fathers," Henry was a significant enslaver himself. At the time of his death, he owned 112 enslaved people (redhill.org).

Panel five shows a clash of swords, bayonets, and long knives, with Black soldiers fighting against the British. The title is: *We have no Property! We have no wives! No children! We have no city! No country!*—petition of many slaves, 1773." The quotation comes from Herbert Aptheker's *A Documentary History of the Negro People in the United States* (1951), in which slaves were petitioning the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Aptheker, a communist historian, was hounded by the U.S. government during the anti-communist assaults of the 1950s. The point is

that there is a long history of workers struggling against racism.

The title of Panel 11 consists of a string of numbers followed by the words "—an informer's coded message." In this panel, one figure in profile whispers into the ear of a man facing forward. The string of numbers is the code used by the traitor Benedict Arnold when he betrayed the war movements of General George Washington. The panel clearly references FBI informants who were called as witnesses to the mid-1950s hearings of the House Committee on Un-American Activities and Senator Joseph McCarthy's Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations. The catalogue reproduces a photograph of McCarthy and his infamous lawyer Roy Cohn, who later went on to mentor the young Donald Trump. Many of Lawrence's friends were called to such panels of inquisition; some had their careers ruined by informers.

The writers in the exhibition catalogue are a multiracial group of artists, curators, historians, and art collectors. One curator commented, "In the tradition of artist-educators, Lawrence produced his *Struggle* series to make history more rebellious, democratic, and complex in a manner that continues to resonate today."

Jacob Lawrence's paintings brought real history alive in the spirit of Karl Marx, who with Friedrich Engels wrote in the 1848 *Communist Manifesto*: *Workers of the world, unite! You have nothing to lose but your chains!* Many artists today follow in Lawrence's footsteps, and the exhibition catalogue includes illustrations of their works and their words. The exhibition is now at the Birmingham Museum of Art in Alabama and then will move on to the Seattle Art Museum and The Phillips Collection in Washington, DC.📍

LETTERS

We encourage all CHALLENGE readers to send in letters and articles about their experiences fighting the bosses worldwide.



How dare you?

“How dare you reject voting when Black people fought, endured beatings and died for that right?”

This can be a tough question. A co-worker asked me this in front of class in the days after the election, referencing John Lewis, a Black fighter-turned-politician. We have a good history of struggle and unity with each

other, especially when it’s against racist attacks on our students. She tried making the point that we can do both, that voting does not exclude other forms of struggle against racism. But something still didn’t feel right about where we left things.

After thinking for a couple of days I had an answer: John Lewis was at his best BEFORE he got sucked into electoral politics. As a student, his role in multiracial freedom rides into the South exposed not just Ku Klux Klan terror in the South but also the Kennedy administration’s refusal to provide decent protection for these brave youth.

Later on, John Lewis got so deep into electoral politics he wound up getting elected and serving as a manager of Black oppression for decades in the Atlanta area.

This is the track record of every brave fighter who went so far into electoral politics that they held office, and it is a reminder of why voting fails workers as a strategy to overcome oppression.

★★★★★

Colombia: indigenous workers protest racist disregard

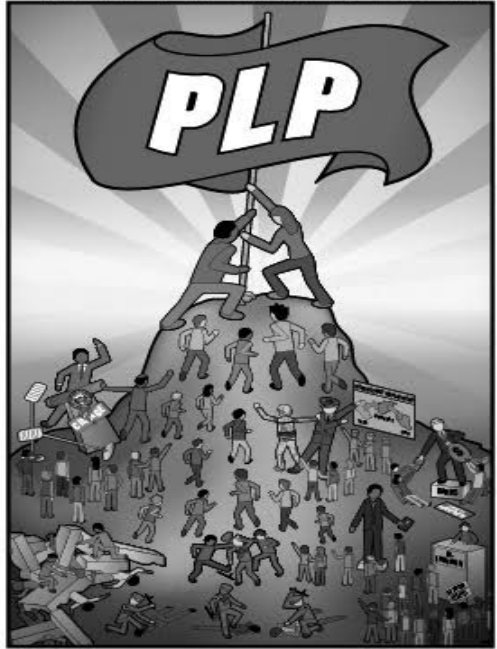
Recently the indigenous Minga, from Southwestern region of the country, came up to Bogota to protest against the abuses they endure at the hands of Colombia's capitalists. Members of the indigenous movement marched to demand the right to exist, and stand in solidarity in the defense of the country’s working class lives. There have been hundreds of murders of village leaders since the signed “peace agreements.” There have been more than 232 of The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) fighters killed since this false peace. These deaths do not even take into account the deaths caused by the lack of health access for the majority of the population with Covid-19.

The Progressive Labor Party will be present in these marches with our message that the struggle for communism to defeat capitalism, the system guilty of this crisis that strikes us all, is the only way forward!

★★★★★



**CAPITALISM
BREEDS SEXISM
RACISM
& IMPERIALISM!**



**FIGHT FOR A COMMUNIST
WORLD
BUILD THE INTERNATIONAL
PLP!
PROGRESSIVE LABOR PARTY**

Education

Direct anger at the rulers, sow unity among our class

NEW YORK CITY, November 18 – The liberal New York City (NYC) bosses’ racist handling of the pandemic is coming to a head as positive Covid-19 cases among students led liberal misleaders Governor Andrew Cuomo and Mayor Bill de Blasio to shut down school buildings and revert back to all remote learning today.

These past two months have taught the working class—students, parents, and education workers—some lessons on who this system is built for and who it is built against. Progressive Labor Party in the education field is gathering virtually this Sunday to report back and share our experiences, lessons, and fight-backs.

Promising developments

This week, teachers’ anger bubbled over in recent social studies department meetings at two different Brooklyn high schools. A promising sign is that teacher frustration is not directed at students. School leaders who haven’t a clue on how to engage students in distance learning are demanding that teachers “figure it out.” Heat in buildings has not kept pace with the need for open windows, leaving classrooms routinely just a few degrees warmer than the outdoors. Through a class-conscious lens, teacher anger is being directed at school bosses, not at students.

In schools where communist ideas have a



history, union chapters have been won over to the pro-student idea that our presence as education workers in school buildings is important to guarantee that it is safe to return. Otherwise the bosses will take shortcuts that risk student health. Some of the “me-first” ideology that capitalism teaches is being displaced as a more pro-student form of class-consciousness is taking hold.

But in schools where communist practices have taken root, school-based “equity teams” have moved from theoretical to actual antira-

cist work. An example is offering support for teachers in correctly handling racist outbursts in virtual classrooms.

Going against the grain

Teachers are trained by the bosses, that when things go wrong, they should blame students and their parents. But most of us also know on some level that the main purpose of schools under capitalism is not to educate working-class students to become critical thinking humans, but rather to recreate capitalist inequities and teach students to accept them.

It’s no wonder, then, that remote and hybrid education is a mess that leaves both students and their educators frustrated. For instance, it’s hard to teach a class of students when their cameras are off. Kids are depressed because they live in a world where there is no sense of a stable future, short or long term.

Teaching students that their anger and sadness is a completely logical response to the crisis of capitalism is necessary. Above all, teaching students that they have to become part of a movement to smash this racist system is the most important lesson we as communists and antiracist fighters need to impart. When feeling frustrated in school the best remedy is to become more political with students! ✪

To beat the bosses' army, we need a red army of our own



You're showing up to the protest and you're saying with the weaponry, with the numbers, with the tank, with the National Guard, with all the stuff, 'We're going to hurt you if you don't go home. We're going to cause you physical harm.' You don't put the public in imminent danger and then pretend like we're the aggressors - Mohawk Johnson

CHICAGO, November 17— Antiracist students and workers here remain committed to fighting the bosses' racist system and kkkops. Specifically, we continue to support the mass antiracist campaign to free Black artist/organizer Jeremy "Mohawk" Johnson, who was arrested during an anti-klkkop protest downtown in August and remains on house arrest (see CHALLENGE 11/4, 11/18). Members of the international communist Progressive Labor Par-

ty (PLP) fight to build this struggle not only for our class brother Mohawk, but for all working-class people whose lives have been shortened and destroyed by capitalism.

As we have seen, not only this past summer, but for many decades, fighting against capitalism and the massive state apparatus that upholds it will be a bloody, prolonged battle. Unfortunately for us, the bosses have already built their army, investing trillions upon trillions of dollars into their military force, the kkkops, ICE, and the racist courts. They use their state apparatus to terrorize workers with deportations, evictions, jails, and countless other tactics that continue to traumatize the working class.

The only way to defeat capitalism is to start a communist revolution under the banner of PLP. There is no end to capitalism's war and oppression. Capitalism means the ruination of our class, our

families, and our friends. Capitalism is the dictatorship of the bosses. They hold power through their political parties, their cops, their courts, and their military. They pretend to be democratic, but their "democracy" is a fraud. Only worldwide communism offers workers, soldiers, and students the power to make our own decisions in our own interests.

This is why we must continue to fight and build community among each other as organizers, students and workers. We want a system that encourages every worker to become involved in running society, that trains everyone to act for the common good and does not indoctrinate people to "look out for number one." Communist society opposes placing selfish interests above the social needs.

This is why we, as antiracist fighters, must continue to show up to each and every protest, march, rally, gathering, court support, and strike to show the bosses that we have an army as well. We in PLP are building a mass international Red Army of workers that will fight to end capitalism and destroy the oppressive systems that keep us down.

Building the struggle that gets the charges against Mohawk dropped will remind us of the collective power we have as an organized working class to push back against the bosses' racist and sexist attacks. It'll then be on us to keep the momentum growing, building our mass PLP until it's large and powerful enough to crush this capitalist system for good.☺

To learn more ways to support, visit linktr.ee/freemohawk



RED EYE ON THE NEWS . . .

Squeezing the elderly: \$1,759 for a 1-mile ambulance ride

NYT, 11/6 — Michael Hambley's...87-year-old mother told him that her assisted living facility... was charging a...\$900 fee for masks, cleaning supplies and meal delivery....

Jennifer Koeckhoven...noted that [a] one-mile ambulance ride already cost [her mother] \$1,759.... Surprise "Covid" and "PPE" fees have turned up across the country....

...Additional costs [are] being imposed right and left because of Covid-19....when millions of Americans are reeling after losing jobs and the health insurance that came with it....The new charges range...to nearly \$1,000....Some of the extra charges include an \$11 daily lunch fee...."It seemed like this was an opportunity to take advantage of a population that is already vulnerable," Mr. Hambley said. "They have no visits, no engagements. And on top of that they are scared."

U.S. rulers use pandemic to rob benefits

NYT, 10/30 — The coronavirus has put tens of millions of Americans out of work, and economists are predicting that the recovery will take years.

...All [Social Security] benefit checks will need to be cut [eventually] by roughly one-quarter....wiping out jobs and the payroll taxes — Social Security's dedicated source of revenue — that they provide.... Trump wants to eliminate the payroll tax, Social Security's lifeblood....Having Social Security in the mix with everything else puts the program at risk.... Biden's proposal would buy the program only an additional five years of solvency....

Under current law, retirement benefits can only come out of the trust fund, which will be depleted by 2034,...estimates that do not take the pandemic into account....Taxes collected will be enough to pay only 76 percent of benefits. A Congressional Budget Office report...predicted the trust fund would run out in 2031; others...project it could be sooner....25 percent of elderly households rely on Social Security for at least 90 percent of their income.

[Editor's Note: "Having Social Security in the mix

with everything else puts the program at risk" is precisely what the Johnson administration did in 1968. As we wrote in the Oct. 7 CHALLENGE, this "in-the-mix" sleight-of-hand led to a \$5 trillion swindle of workers' SS. In 1968, war expenditures for the U.S. invasion of Vietnam were skyrocketing, spinning the Federal budget into a bottomless pit, while the SS Trust Fund was running a surplus. So in order to "balance the federal budget," the Johnson gang "folded" the SS surplus into a newly labeled "Unified Federal Budget," violating the bosses' law banning use of SS Trust Fund money for purposes other than for SS benefits. This masked the federal deficit but to avoid the appearance of stealing the SS surplus, the government gave the SS Trust Fund U.S. Treasury notes equal to its "loan," promising to pay back the loan.

[This meant that the SS surpluses could be used to pay for all government costs, especially for its "forever" wars. This resulted in mounting federal deficits and debts to pay back the trillions "loaned" from the SS Fund's surpluses, now "folded" into this new "Unified Federal Budget." "Over the second and third decades of the 21st century, Congress will have to appropriate...\$5 trillion for Social Security (NY Times, 1/31/95)," a crisis indeed, composed of SS surpluses stolen from workers' payments into the SS Trust Fund.]

Hamilton: All U.S. founders enslavers

NYT, 11/10 — Did the...founding father, celebrated in the musical "Hamilton" as a "revolutionary...abolitionist" actually own slaves?

In... "Alexander Hamilton's Hidden History as an Enslaver," Jessie Serfilippi...examines letters, account books and other documents. Her conclusion...is blunt.

Not only did Alexander Hamilton enslave people, but his involvement in the institution of slavery was essential to his identity....

"It is vital," she adds, "that the myth of Hamilton as 'the Abolitionist Founding Father' end."

Annette Gordon-Reed...the author of "The Heminges of Monticello," ... "shows that the founders were nearly all implicated in slavery...."

Ms. Serfilippi's research... "reflects the central place of slavery in America's Founding...."

Hamilton married into the powerful Schuyler family...among New York State's elite, and...were some of the largest slaveholders in their area.... Hamilton helped legal clients and family members...buy and sell enslaved people.

Strikes spread across capitalist China

NYT, 11/12 — Fang Guobao...a package courier...was delivering about 250 parcels a day....Then his paychecks stopped. His boss asked for more time twice. Then she stopped answering her phone.

So Mr. Fang and several colleagues resolved to stop working....They joined a string of other strikes and protests...resonating through China...[against] low wages and grueling working conditions.

...The unrest accelerated...before Singles' Day... [when] sales...totaled \$74 billion, nearly double last year's record \$38.3 billion....But...low-income workers...have continued to struggle. Express delivery orders ...have surged....Yet the boom has not trickled down to the couriers....

...Workers in Hunan Province went on strike last month for more than \$45,000 in back wages, leaving orders of hairy crab to rot in their boxes. In Shenyang, abandoned packages were dumped in an empty field....The courier strikes...underscored [other low-income workers] both their dissatisfaction and desperation.

...The companies...have slashed the amount of money that couriers collect for each delivery....

Best Express...did not issue \$30,000 in wages to eight workers as promised. Mr. Fang...was owed about \$3,000 in wages, the equivalent of four or five months pay. In...Suzhou, couriers filed a police report to recover more than \$15,000 in unpaid wages, so far to no avail....

But legal procedures remain scarce, given the couriers' lack of employment contracts....Nor are independent labor unions allowed in ["Communist?"] China.... Xinhua, the state-run news agency...call[ed] reports of strikes "fake."

THE SCOURGE OF CAPITALISM

As the Covid-19 pandemic nears a harrowing winter, with deaths surging to record levels around the globe, the profit system is killing masses of people by the day. Worldwide, thanks to capitalist inaction, incompetence, misleadership, and greed, more than 55 million workers have been sickened and over 1.3 million have died—official numbers that are surely huge undercounts. In Belgium, nurses and doctors were ordered to keep working after testing positive, as long as they weren't coughing in patients' faces (nbcnews.com, 11/2). In Mexico, where the fake-left president dismisses masks and under two percent of the population has been tested, intensive care units are overrun (aljazeera.com, 11/15). Latin America, said *The Lancet*, the top British medical journal, *is facing a humanitarian crisis borne out of political instability, corruption, social unrest, fragile health systems, and perhaps most importantly, longstanding and pervasive inequality...* (11/7).

In other words, the working class is suffering from capitalism, the deadliest plague in human history. Exhibit A is the United States, the planet's wealthiest nation and the runaway leader in Covid carnage. In mid-November, the U.S. logged a million new cases in six days. Hospitals are once again scrounging for medical-grade masks. It can take hours to get tested and precious days to get the results. Rural patients are dying while waiting for space in jammed urban hospitals (USA Today, 11/15). In El Paso, county inmates were enlisted to move an overflow of bodies to mobile morgue units (Texas Tribune, 11/15). By treating us as commodities, capitalism devalues human life as a matter of course, through war and exploitation and the rationing of healthcare. For the bosses, the pandemic is a crisis only insofar as it threatens their revenues. Workers, as per usual, are expendable.

We Are Who We Need!

According to a gold-standard statistical model from the University of Washington, we can expect 80,000 more women, men, and children in the U.S. to die of Covid by January 1, and nearly 200,000 more by March 1. By December, fatalities are projected to reach 3,000 per day (cnn.com, 11/18), more than the 9/11 death toll. And because of racist inequalities in healthcare, housing, and employment, Black workers continue to die at greater than twice the rate of white workers (COVID Tracking Project).

As inter-imperialist competition drives a divided, weakened U.S. ruling class toward fascism and World War III, the pandemic has exposed the bosses as the monsters and frauds they are, utterly unfit to run society. Only the international working class, led by a vanguard mass communist party, can protect our lives and our health. Only a communist revolution can smash the rotten capitalist state and meet our needs. But to get there, workers must reject the rabbit hole of reformism, the illusion of electoral democracy, and the lethal deceit of lesser-evil liberal politicians. Our most dangerous class enemies are the president- and vice president-elect, Jim Crow Joe Biden and Top Cop Kamala Harris.

It's All About the Money, Honey

In a November 11 interview with Yahoo Finance, Michael Osterholm,

the eminent Minnesota epidemiologist on Biden's blue-ribbon pandemic advisory panel, spoke out of turn. Osterholm posed a simple way to crush Covid case numbers and save tens of thousands of lives: a strict four-to-six-week national lockdown. By borrowing at historically low interest rates, the federal government could cover *lost wages for individual workers ... losses to small companies, to medium-sized companies or city, state, county governments... Then we could really watch ourselves cruising into the vaccine availability in the first and second quarter of next year*(abc.com, 11/12).

This was only common sense. As daily infections approach the 200,000 mark, contact tracing is impractical. (If a typical person has 50 contacts, that's 10 million traces per day.) In a degraded capitalist culture, appeals to "individual responsibility" won't cut it—not when millions of cynical workers follow the bare-faced lead of Sociopath in Chief Donald Trump, and millions more give in to pandemic fatigue. For now, the one way to quell the virus is by keeping most people home.

But the next day, Vivek Murthy, the panel co-chair, made clear that a national lockdown was off the table. With caseloads rising in all 50 states and spiking across most of them, Murthy said: *The way we should be thinking about this is more like a series of restrictions that we dial up or down depending on how bad the spread is taking place in a specific region* (abc.com, 11/13). The upshot is that Biden will pass the buck to state and local governments and their random crazy quilt of mandates—not so different from Trump's approach.

Murthy is an internist who served as Barack Obama's surgeon general. He has no formal training in epidemiology. But he understands that the president-elect can't afford to offend the Big Fascist liberal bosses who put Biden where he is today. A lockdown would be bad for business, at least in the short run. Giving workers what we need would be a drain on finance capital. It's why New York City has closed the city's schools before shuttering bars and restaurants. Under capitalism, money talks—first, last, always.

Vaccine politics

Hours after Pfizer released promising data from a Phase three trial, CEO Albert Bourla sold \$5.6 million in company stock (Wall Street Journal, 11/11). Though the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines may indeed be game-changers, capitalist medicines are like sausage; the more you learn about how they're made, the less appealing they get. After months of cowardly kowtowing to Trump, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA)—the vaccine approval agency—has lost credibility. At least seven states plan to add their own expert vetting. *The people of*



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this country don't trust this federal government, said New York Governor Andrew Cuomo, the hospital closure king who killed thousands by forcing positive cases back into nursing homes.

Even the best medicines won't work if they don't get delivered to those who need them. As big pharma is showered with billions of federal dollars, state and local public health departments are starved of needed resources to distribute and track two doses on an enormous scale. Whenever there's scarcity under capitalism, racism determines who gets left behind. A Maine official acknowledged that "insufficient funding" would slow the rate of vaccination, particularly among disadvantaged populations that are harder to reach" (NYT, 11/14). Internationally, a criminal lag in access to older vaccines—for polio, tuberculosis, and measles—bodes ill for the Covid crisis: *The historical norm is that a vaccine of this sort is quickly given to those privileged to live in the world's richest nations, while the rest of the world's population often suffers for several decades before deadly diseases are eradicated—if they ever are*" (Foreign Policy, 11/12). The poorest countries have next to no public health infrastructure, *making it more likely that substandard and falsified vaccines will appear on the market*.

Polls suggest that a third or more of the U.S. population may be reluctant to get inoculated, a deadly obstacle to herd immunity. Between the anti-vaxxer disinformation machine and workers' reasonable doubts about the FDA and Centers for Disease Control, there's little trust in capitalist medicine these days. It all adds up to a *very dark winter*, as Biden has warned. But we know that spring will come when Progressive Labor Party leads the international working class to the cure for what ails us: fight for communism, where decent healthcare will be available to the entire working class. Join us!🇸🇰

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